



# *the* CHALLENGE

MOVING EARTH TO SHARE HEAVEN **MARCH 2025**

## Authentically Sharing the Gospel Through Relationships

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FIAintl.org

# KINGDOM COLLABORATION

## What Missions Is Meant to Look Like



“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

– Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)

### A MESSAGE FROM ANDY BACHERT, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER (COO)

**E**arly in my mission experience, I noticed something that didn't sit quite right with me. Mission organizations often operated in isolation, focusing solely on their projects and initiatives. This siloed approach seemed at odds with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, where he reminds us that "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ... For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body."

The truth is it doesn't matter which organizational "badge" we wear. What matters is that our work, whether done through Friends in Action International or any other ministry, leads people to Jesus Christ. No thread stands alone in the grand tapestry of God's kingdom work.

Our partnerships exemplify this vision in action. When we partner with organizations like Milandila Community Missions in Uganda, we're not simply constructing buildings but helping build a sustainable ministry platform. What began with building their home grew into constructing a team guest house and now extends to renovating their clinic. Each project

represents deepening relationships and expands ministry opportunities in a community eager to hear the gospel.

Similarly, the aviation hangar we're building for New Tribes Mission (Ethnos360) in Papua New Guinea isn't just a steel and concrete structure – it's a vital link in the chain of gospel outreach to remote communities. When we drill water wells with Mexico Medical Mission, we are not just providing clean water but creating opportunities for living water to flow into communities.

These partnerships exemplify what kingdom collaboration should look like: different parts of the Body of Christ working in harmony, each contributing their unique gifts and resources. At Friends in Action International, we've learned that the strongest partnerships are built on mutual respect, shared vision, and a deep commitment to seeing Christ glorified.

As we look to the future, we see God opening even more doors for collaborative ministry. Our role is not to compete with other organizations but to come alongside them, strengthening their hands

for the work God has called them to do. Whether it is construction, water resources, or other technical needs, our partnerships allow each organization to focus on its core calling of sharing Jesus. At the same time, we provide the technical expertise they need.

To our faithful supporters who make this work possible through your prayers and generous giving – thank you. Your partnership enables these broader collaborations that are advancing the gospel around the world. As Paul wrote to the Philippians: "I thank my God every time I remember you... because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3,5).

Together, we are not just building structures – we are building bridges for the gospel. We are not just meeting physical needs – we are creating platforms for spiritual transformation. As we Move Earth to Share Heaven, we remain committed to strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones, always to see more people reached with the transforming message of Jesus Christ. ■

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor.”

– Ecclesiastes 4:9 (KJV)



# Authentically Sharing the Gospel THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

James Tumwesiigye could have contracted a drill rig when he needed a well dug at his home in Lusanja, a small town in his native Uganda.

Instead, the executive director of Milandila Community Missions hired men from his village so that he could develop friendships and, most importantly, share the gospel with his community.

From that experience, James now mentors two new believers.

It also led to Milandila's partnership with Friends In Action.

Milandila was founded by James and his wife, Morgan, as the expression of their mission to advance health and spiritual wellness in the communities they serve. Milandila's multi-disciplinary approach follows God's teaching that partnership is valuable in building His Kingdom.

“Milandila” means root, foundation, or the beginning of something. Milandila Community Missions is rooted in the gospel of Jesus and relationship building is the foundation that allows them to work with people to meet their spiritual needs.

Milandila first partnered with FIA to build their mission home as the local men did not have the skills, and the cost to contract would be prohibitive. After working with FIA, the men gained valuable trade skills and developed lasting relationships between James, the FIA team, and each other.

Amazingly, these men also opened their hearts to the word of God. Each morning after breakfast, they listened attentively to devotionals that prompted questions about faith, God, and religion, allowing the Holy Spirit to work within them.

"For each of us, we partnered with one or two workers," said Andy Bachert, FIA team leader. "We worked side by side, living out Christ's values, and trained the men in what we did while doing it."

This training proved fruitful through the testimony of a local man named Medi, who helped construct the house.

"This first time, Medi had no skills and didn't know how to do anything," said James. However, through the weeks that FIA was there, Andy taught Medi how to install floor

tiles. Later, Medi taught the local men how to install the tiles. James shared that Medi was a devoted Muslim, but now he is trying to learn more about Jesus and is open to talking about him, a testament to the transformative power of faith.

At the Family Center, Morgan and her staff walk with the women throughout their pregnancies, planting seeds of Jesus through conversation, counseling, and discussion-based Bible teaching. As of this writing, an FIA team is in Lusanja to begin the construction of a new clinic that will care for these women and families

from the village and rural areas closer to home.

"It's such a blessing to partner with FIA," James shared. "With the practical help from FIA with construction projects, Milandila can advance its outreach while being able to focus on its ministry."

God created us for each other. For community. Milandila is helping their community find the most valuable possession—a relationship with Jesus.

FIA partners with Milandila, providing practical support through construction

projects, for the Bible says, "Two are better than one." (Ecclesiastes 4:9). However, partnership at FIA is more than just meeting practical needs.

Out of those needs, God blesses us with relationships that support and strengthen each of us. As God calls us, we are to "Encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Through encouragement, Godly care, and love, we become friends along the way, sharing the love of people, the love of God, and the desire to see all people know of the salvation of Christ. ■



# Wells, Fences & Soccer Fields

## STRENGTHENING MINISTRIES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

### WEST AFRICA

MATT DURKEE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIA

“**S**ince coming to serve in West Africa, I’ve found two key areas that help build a connection with the people here, regardless of whether they are Muslims or those who practice the traditional animistic and ancestral worship: **farming and water**. These areas are part of everyday life in almost every community. Engaging in one of those areas provides a natural way to bridge relationships in the community. It can also provide the way to see the gospel shared,” explained Jeremy Effler, FIA Field Leader in West Africa.

These deep connections can be complicated for foreigners in this country. Language, culture, and past experiences

can be stumbling blocks. People from the Western world value things differently than those in Africa, and international workers serving on this continent often must let go of traditional mission strategies to take on a “different” approach to share the truth about Jesus.

Here, it’s all about connection—personally connecting is key and, in many ways, critical to ongoing ministry remaining effective in the West African context. Bridging a connection and building a relationship makes speaking truth into the life of someone natural and meaningful. We speak because we care, and because you know me, you may be more willing to stay and listen, and even

hear, when I speak a truth that may be contrary to what you believe.

As a key pillar of FIA ministry, mission partnerships provide the means through which FIA works in this West African country. We make greater ministry inroads by partnering with international mission workers, national pastors, national evangelical associations, and creative outreach ministries. These frontline workers are hard at work building bridges of peace into communities for the sake of the gospel.

As support for them in their areas of ministry, sometimes through construction or by drilling wells, sometimes just by showing up to help get a needed job done, FIA serves to strengthen, reinforce, and even help create opportunities to build those bridges into the lives of those they are serving. Our team looks to see where God is moving and asks, “Where can we help?”.

## Partnerships with International Workers (Missionaries)

One of our first areas of assistance this year is a well-drilling project with a partner whose family has been longtime international workers. This partner has created a football (soccer) sports ministry of soccer camps and sporting events for children and adults.

The excitement about these sports camps has sparked neighborhoods to create their own sandlot soccer teams and neighborhood tournaments. From our Western worldview, these are normal activities. In Africa, they build bridges into the community that facilitate the sharing of the gospel of the grace of God.

The need for water to operate the camp allowed FIA to partner with the sports ministry, and the community will watch us with anticipation and eagerness to see water gush from the ground.



They also will witness our Christ-like interactions with our partners, each other, and with them as we embody the message of salvation, grace, and love. Water for the sports camp brings people in, and that is where relationships begin.

## Partnerships with National Pastors

Our field team also engages in a different type of partnership coming alongside the church planting ministries of national pastors in the area. We have built a strong relationship with a trusted pastor, Timothy,\* who helps guide and bridge new relationships with the kind of pastors we hope for and intend to partner with.

A typical approach after the rainy season ends (Oct/ Nov) is visiting rural village locations to meet with the local pastors and church planters. The intent is to get to know the person and the purpose driving the ministries in these communities. After making personal connections and hearing the testimonies of the pastors, one begins to get a feel for the vision the Lord has given them for the people there.

Last September, the team traveled with Pastor Timothy to meet a pastor trying to plant a church in a Muslim village. When they arrived, they discovered his wife was sick, so they went into the house and prayed over her. Throughout the visit, he would leave to go outside and chase away goats, sheep, and other animals from his little garden plot, which was his family’s food for the year. The animals continuously thwarted his attempts to keep them out with a natural wall of bushes with thorns; all day and night, he would chase them. With all this and his wife’s health, it was clear he was struggling.

As God moved their hearts by the situation, the team asked Pastor Timothy if purchasing a fence for him would be helpful. He replied, “If you will buy a fence and pay for the transport, I’ll get men from my church to build the

*\*Name has been changed for security reasons.*

fence.” Not only would this humble pastor be encouraged by receiving a fence for his garden, but he was also given a strong reminder that he and his family were not alone on the front lines. These are the times when the presence of a friend, a brother, or a sister chases away the clouds of doubt or despair. This, too, becomes part of

what it means to serve as a “friend in action”.

## The Big Takeaway

Effective partnerships require trust, respect, and a shared vision. We’re always looking for where God is at work as we work alongside those faithful

ministers of the Word advancing the Kingdom in this country. We make our plans, but sometimes the opportunity to have the most significant impact comes in the least expected way. That’s just how God works. Our God has been good at directing our team to see the needs of our partners and giving us the opportunity to help. ■



## “My Mission is Missions” LEONARD TURNS 100!

“Every man according as he purposed in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” – 2 Corinthians 9:7 (KJV)

One of FIA’s long-term supporters, Leonard Deitz, recently celebrated his 100th birthday. Hearing Leonard’s impressions about his life and legacy inspires investment in missions.

Celebrating through a card shower, Leonard received 105 cards, one for each year of his life and with some extra to “grow on”! His favorite card was signed by his doctor’s office nurses and staff who commented they never had another patient achieve this kind of longevity. Leonard speaks of this milestone as evidence of God’s faithfulness and goodness in his life.

Leonard has quite a story of love and legacy. Growing up on a farm, Leonard fondly recalls learning the value of hard work from planting crops with his grandfather using horses. He even remembers the invention of the tractor! After 4 children, 7 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren, and 3 wives, he testifies to the importance of putting relationships first.

Leonard also stressed using whatever resources and skills God provides to make God known. He remembers using a plot of land gifted to him to plant potatoes and corn to supply the local

food bank. The Lord gave him such bumper crops that children from The Milton Hershey School came to help pick all the potatoes! Leonard seemed to consistently have a vision for “out of the box” kinds of ministries to share the love of Jesus with the world.

During his working years, Leonard learned valuable trade skills employed by contractors as a carpenter and then home builder before starting his own cabinet-making business. These practical skills would prove invaluable later in life as the Lord used Leonard to make gospel impacts through FIA’s work teams.

Leonard and his current wife of 22 years, Cheryl, inherited a passion for missions begun by Leonard’s second wife Kathryn, who invested in FIA’s well-drilling ministries in Africa. Their commitment to missions started through giving but eventually led to going.

Leonard volunteered on numerous mission trips and was instrumental in helping FIA construct more than 90 homes among the Miskito people of Nicaragua. With the passing of the years, Leonard’s volunteering evolved to encompass more supervising and

mentoring through equipping the next generation to carry on the heavy construction efforts.

While he can no longer serve in the field, Leonard continues to make bold choices to see Jesus made known among the nations. One such choice was to include FIA in his will.

“I’m ready to go in a new way,” shared Leonard, meaning he is ready to see his Savior whenever that time comes. “Until then, I can still pray, and I can still give. My mission is still missions, and that’s why I put FIA in my will.”

We are so grateful for Leonard and Cheryl, and so many of you, who consistently pray, give, and go to see gospel work move forward through FIA and its partners. For those already invested in our mission, there are always ways to engage further as Leonard has done through legacy giving. And, for those new to what God is doing through FIA, there’s always room for one more in our circle of friends! Our Director of Partnership Development would love to answer any questions or discuss specific ways to get involved: [TimJohnston@FIAintl.org](mailto:TimJohnston@FIAintl.org) or 717.579.7001. ■



# A Center of Hope

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” – Isaiah 41:10 (KJV)



## AMY NEHLSSEN, CO-FOUNDER/US REPRESENTATIVE/BOARD MEMBER OF DORCAS HOUSE

What does HOPE look like in the face of despair and overwhelming poverty? We know that some regions of our world are extremely violent toward the gospel at this time. Integrating ourselves is enormously difficult and often brings greater exposure to otherwise innocent people. When we can support a thriving work like Dorcas House from behind and underneath, the gospel flourishes and real-heart transformation happens. Jesus is lifted up, and people can access His Word in their language.

We celebrate this at Dorcas House—a small but vibrant residential, vocational school nestled in the West African suburbs outside the capital city of Burkina Faso. One hundred ninety young women have graduated from this 2-year residential center since its inception in 2006. These graduates return to their villages with the gift of their treadle sewing machine and the training to use it. This transformational Center is Christ-centered, skill-based, and dynamically equipping young women without access to this level of discipleship and life-skills training.

Extreme poverty, lack of educational options for young women, and a rapidly declining economy in this West African country are all factors that contribute to this lack of access.

In 2006, a group of spirited Christian women in Burkina Faso had the vision to create a school to help young girls ages 17-25 who may still be illiterate to learn to read and write, sew and do clothing construction, fabric die, garden, and other life-skills training, while having daily Christian discipleship.

Today, this project, which I have had the joy of being a part of since its inception, is still flourishing and serving these girls, their families, and the community.



Girls showing their workspace

**What does our Friends In Action (FIA) partnership look like?** From some of the earliest days with help drilling our original well, FIA has continued to support Dorcas House in tangible ways. Now as a project under FIA’s banner, the ministry is supported through a framework of prayer, accountability, and complementary vision. Our donors are blessed to have access to a professional giving venue to continue their support of this valuable program. FIA and Dorcas House share a passion for seeing the Gospel reach the last, lost and least, accompanied by the daily life skills and foundations that help people live out and propel the good news in their communities.



A graduate and her father

Headed by the Alliance Women Burkina, these partnerships provide a framework of support on which this fragile, yet vital program continues to grow. After 19 years of ministry, I remain humbled by what the Lord does through His people standing and serving together. Let us dream together about how to bring healthy and sustainable support to this life-transforming ministry, for the sake of the Kingdom.



Vivianne, an early graduate living out her testimony as a woman of God

If you would like to donate to Dorcas House through FIA, please visit: [FIAintl.org/support/dorcas-house](http://FIAintl.org/support/dorcas-house)

# 2025 TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

A short-term trip can be an adventure of a lifetime! On a trip with FIA, you'll see the work of God on the mission field, be a blessing to another culture, and discover how your skills can help further the Gospel. Use your trade skills to help make Christ known by volunteering on one (or more) of FIA's upcoming trips.

## DOMESTIC

### MISSOURI | May, November

- Interior remodel/renovation work, interior remodels of residential dwellings at ETHNOS 360 mission training center in Camdenton, MO.
- Need general laborers, interior finishing, plumbing, and electrical workers.

## INTERNATIONAL

### WELL DRILLING

#### WEST AFRICA | April

- Drilling water wells to support partner ministries.
- Need general labor and manpower.

#### MEXICO | April, November

- Drilling community wells and mechanical services to support vehicle and equipment maintenance programs for a remote mission hospital.

### MECHANICS

#### VANUATU | April

- Equipment and automotive service.
- Need heavy equipment mechanics, hydraulic technicians, and vehicle electrical systems experts.

#### WEST AFRICA | August

- Diesel engine/equipment service and repair, and trailer fabrication.
- Need heavy equipment mechanics, and fabricators/welder.

#### MEXICO | April, November

- Hospital vehicle & equipment/generator servicing.
- Need general laborers, equipment service and automotive service specialists.

## CONSTRUCTION

### NICARAGUA

#### April

- Community Center development (pouring concrete flooring, basic septic/water management, laying/finishing cement block walls, concrete pillars and bond beams).
- Need mason, concrete, plumbing and general laborers.

#### August

- Finish carpentry (tables, benches, doors, cabinets) to complete the work on the Community Center development.
- Need finish carpenters and general laborers.

#### November

- General construction (assisting the general construction & development of the Rama community).
- Need plumbers, builders, and general laborers.

### VANUATU | July, September

- Services workshop construction (steel frame, truss & roof).
- Need welders, fabrication, and general laborers.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

### VANUATU

#### August

- Rural Water Supply Project.
- Village-level community assessments and rainwater harvesting project; design and project development.



SCAN TO LEARN  
MORE ABOUT  
TRIPS:

[FIAintl.org/get-involved](https://FIAintl.org/get-involved)

## Project Managers

FIA receives requests from partner missions to engage in both short-term and ongoing project management services to support construction and expansion projects.

We are looking for experienced managers willing to serve anywhere from two weeks to 12 months (single deployment or multiple deployments) based on the needs of the projects.

For more information, contact Andy Bachert, U.S. Chief Operating Officer, at [andybachert@faintl.org](mailto:andybachert@faintl.org).

## Full-Time International Workers

Is the Lord leading you to jump all-in to serve alongside our mission partners as a full-time international worker? Our team is growing, and we are ready to welcome you!

For more information and to start the conversation:

Canadians, email [FIA-CAN@faintl.org](mailto:FIA-CAN@faintl.org)  
Americans, email [FIA-USA@faintl.org](mailto:FIA-USA@faintl.org)

Open postings include Well Drilling (West Africa), Builder (Papua New Guinea & Vanuatu), Mechanic (West Africa & Papua New Guinea), Sustainable Income Project Developer (Bolivia), Farm Manager (Vanuatu)



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